

## Yom HaShoah Special: The Torah of Silence

### 1) Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, The Sound of Silence, <https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/bamidbar/the-sound-of-silence/>

Many years ago British television produced a documentary series, *The Long Search*, on the world's great religions. When it came to Judaism, the presenter Ronald Eyre seemed surprised by its blooming, buzzing confusion, especially the loud, argumentative voices in the *beit midrash*, the house of study. Remarking on this to Elie Wiesel, he asked, "Is there such a thing as a *silence* in Judaism?"

### 2) ויקרא פרק טז פסוקים א-ב (פרשת אחרי מות)

וַיְדַבֵּר יְקוֹה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אַהֲרֹן בְּקִרְבָּתָם לִפְנֵי־יְקוֹה וַיִּמְתּוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר יְקוֹה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן אַחִיךָ וְאַל־יָבֹא בְּכַל־עַת אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִבַּיִת לַפְּרֹכֶת אֶל־פְּנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָאָרוֹן וְלֹא יָמוּת כִּי בָעֲנֹן אֶרְאֶה עַל־הַכַּפֹּרֶת:

Hashem spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they drew too close to the presence of Hashem. Hashem said to Moses: Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come at will into the Shrine behind the curtain, in front of the cover that is upon the ark, lest he die; for I appear in the cloud over the cover.

### 3) פרדס יוסף ויקרא פרק טז פסוק א

In the Midrash Rabbah it is written, that once lyov heard about the death of Aharon's two sons, he said, "even for this my heart trembles."

ובמדרש רבה [ויק"ר כ, ה] כיון ששמע איוב  
מיתת שני בני אהרן אמר (איוב ל"ז, א)  
אף לזאת יחרד לבבי, בסוטה (י"א.) וסנהדרין

### 4) תלמוד בבלי מסכת סנהדרין דף נב עמוד א

וכבר היו משה ואהרן מהלכין בדרך ונדב ואביהוא מהלכין אחריהן וכל ישראל אחריהן אמר לו נדב לאביהוא אימתי ימותו שני זקנים הללו ואני ואתה ננהיג את הדור אמר להן הקב"ה הנראה מי קובר את מי.

Apropos the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, an aggadic midrash on this subject is quoted: And it had already happened that Moses and Aaron were walking on their way, and Nadav and Avihu were walking behind them, and the entire Jewish people were walking behind them. Nadav said to Avihu: When will it happen that these two old men will die and you and I will lead the generation, as we are their heirs? The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to them: We shall see who buries whom.

### 5) תלמוד בבלי מסכת סוטה דף יא עמוד א

אמר רבי תייא בר אבא אמר רבי סימאי: שלשה היו באותה עצה: בלעם, ואיוב, ויתרו. בלעם שיעץ – נהרג, איוב ששתק – נידון בייסורין. יתרו שברח – זכו מבני בניו שישבו בלשכת הגזית, שנאמר: "ומשפחות סוֹפְרִים יושְבֵי יַעֲבֹז תִרְעַתִּים שְׁמַעְתִּים שׁוֹכְתִים הִמָּה הַקִּינִים הַבָּאִים מִחַמַת אַבִי בֵית רַכָּב," וכתוב: "ובני קיני חתן משה וגו'".

Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba says that Rabbi Simai says: Three noteworthy people were consulted by Pharaoh in that counsel where Pharaoh questioned what should be done with the Jewish people. They were Balaam, and Job, and Yitro.

Balaam, who advised Pharaoh to kill all sons born to the Jewish people, was punished by being killed in the war with Midian (see Numbers 31:8). Job, who was silent and neither advised nor protested, was punished by suffering, as detailed in the eponymous book in the Bible.

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Yitro, who ran away as a sign of protest, merited that some of his children's children sat in the Sanhedrin in the Chamber of Hewn Stone, as it is stated: "And the families of scribes who dwelt at Jabez, Tirathites, Shimeathites, and Sucathites, these were the Kenites who descended from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab" (I Chronicles 2:55). And it is written: "The children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law" (Judges 1:16). This teaches that the Kenites, descendants of Yitro, the father-in-law of Moses, dwelt at Jabez [Yabetz], referring to the place where the Jewish people go for advice [eitza], i.e., the Chamber of Hewn Stone.

(6 חומת אנך פרשת אחרי פרק טז פסוק א

In the Midrash it is written that once Iyov saw the death of Aharon's two sons, he said (Iyov 37:1): "Because of this, my heart trembles." And I heard in the name of the Rabbis of Ashkenaz that Iyov was one of the advisors of Pharaoh, and when the latter said, "let us outsmart them," Iyov stayed silent, for he reasoned that silence is neutral. And when he saw the sons of Aharon (walking), and Nadav said to Avihu, "when will these two elders die?" And Avihu remained silent. And they both died. Iyov realized that Avihu was punished merely for staying silent.

במדרש כיון שראה איוב מיתת שני בני  
אהרן אמר אף לזאת יחרד לבי  
ושמעתי משם רבני אשכנז דאיוב היה מיועצי  
פרעה כשאמר הבה נתחכמה לו שתק והוא סבר  
דשתיקה לאו כלום היא וכשראה דשני בני אהרן  
דנדב אמר לאביהוא מתי ימותו שני זקנים הללו  
ואביהוא שתק ומתו שניהם ש"מ דעל השתיקה  
לבד נענש ולזה אמר אף לזאת יחרד לבי עכ"ד  
והבאתיו בנחל קדומים. ועתה ראיתי במדרש  
תנחומא על הסדר שאומר שהשנים דיברו בפיהם  
ואם כן נפל היסוד:

### 7) Martin Niëmoller, First They Came

First they came for the Communists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Communist  
Then they came for the Socialists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Socialist  
Then they came for the trade unionists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a trade unionist  
Then they came for the Jews  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Jew  
Then they came for me  
And there was no one left  
To speak out for me